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Psalm 92

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Psalm 92— Logotechnical Analysis

Guidelines

- Please read the [General Introduction](#) as well as the Introduction to [Book I](#) and [Book IV](#).
- For common features found in the numerical analysis charts, see the [Key to the charts](#).

Specific features of Psalm 92

- Very much like the two preceding psalms, Psalm 92 divides into two equal halves on different levels – in this case on all levels: strophes, verselines, cola, and words:
 - vs. 2-8 3 strophes, with 7 verselines, 15 cola, and **52** (2 x 26) words
 - vs. 9 1 strophe, with 1 verseline, 1 colon, and 4 words
 - vs. 10-16 3 strophes, with 7 verselines, 15 cola, and **52** (2 x 26) words.
- Peculiar to Psalm 92, is that its two sections accommodate between them a separate little 4-word pivot: **vs. 9**, which is the absolute middle and apparent meaningful centre.
- The numerical structure of the psalm is astoundingly regular, being organized throughout by means of the number **7** (symbolizing the Sabbath) in combination with the divine name numbers **17** and **26**. As we have seen, Psalm 91 preludes the present psalm!

Strophic structure - Canto/Stanza boundary: || Canticle boundary: |

- Van der Lugt: 2-3, 4-5 | 6, 7-8 || 9-10, 11-12 | 13-14, 15-16 (8 strophes, with 15 verselines and 32 cola, taking vs. 8 and 12 as tricola).
- Fokkelman: 2-4, 5-6, 7-8, **9-10**, 11-12, 13-14, 15-16 (7 strophes, 15 verselines, 31 cola).
- Labuschagne: 2-4, 5-6, 7-8 || **9** || 10-12 | 13-14, 15-16 (7 strophes, with 15 verselines and 31 cola, taking vs. 12 not as a tricolon, but as a bicolic verseline).
- Christensen, who includes the heading in his logoprosodic analysis, divides the text into: 1-4, 5, 6-7, **8-10**, 11-12, 13, 14-16 (7 strophes, "determined primarily on prosodic grounds".) See my critical remarks in the rubric "Strophic structure" in my Analysis of [Psalm 90](#), and compare Observations 1 and 6 below.

Logotechnical analysis

- Columns **a** and **b** show the number of words before and after the atnach.
- Column **c**: words addressed to God; **d**: words spoken about God.
- the numbering of the verselines is shown in **brown**.

			Total	a	b	c	d
1	מְזִמּוֹר שִׁיר לַיּוֹם הַשַּׁבָּת:	Heading	4	4			
2	טוֹב לְהַדְרֹת לַיהוָה	1	3	3			3
	וּלְזִמּוֹר לְשִׁמְךָ עֲלֵינוּ:		3		3	3	
3	לְהַגִּיד בְּבִקְרָה חֲסִידֶיךָ	2	3	3		3	
	וְאִמְוֶנְתָּהּ בְּלִילֹת:		2		2	2	
4	עַל־עֲשׂוֹר וְעַל־נָבֶלָה	3	4	4		4	
	עַל־חַגְוִיּוֹן בְּכִנּוֹר:		3		3	3	
	Strophe 1 Total, v. 2-4		18	= 10	+ 8	= 15	+ 3
5	כִּי שִׁמְחַתְנִי יְהוָה	4	4	4		4	
	בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יָדֶיךָ אֲרֹנָן:		3		3	3	
	Total, v. 5		7	= 4	+ 3	= 7	+ 0
6	מִה־נָּדְלוּ מַעֲשֵׂיךָ	5	4	4		4	
	מֵאֵד עֲמָקוֹ מִחֲשַׁבְתֶּיךָ:		3		3	3	
	Total, v. 6		7	= 4	+ 3	= 7	+ 0
	Strophe 2 Total, v. 5-6		14	= 8	+ 6	= 14	+ 0

7	6	אִישׁ־בַּעַר לֹא יֵדְעָ֣	4	4	4
		וְכָסִיל לֹא־יָבִין אֶת־זֹאת׃	5	5	5
		Total, v. 7	9	= 4 + 5	= 9 + 0
8	7	בַּפֶּרֶחַ רָשָׁעִים כְּמוֹ עֵשֶׂב־	4	4	4
		וַיִּצְיָצוּ כָּל־פְּעָלֵי אֲוֶן־	4	4	4
		לְהַשְׁמָדָם עַד־יָעַר׃	3	3	3
		Total, v. 8	11	= 8 + 3	= 11 + 0
		Strophe 3 Total, v. 7-8	20	= 12 + 8	= 20 + 0
		Total, v. 5-8	34	= 20 + 14	= 34 + 0
		Total, v. 4-8	41	= 24 + 17	= 38 + 3
		First Half: Canto I Total, v. 2-8	52	= 30 + 22	= 49 + 3
	8	וְאַתָּה מְרוֹם לְעֵלָם יִתְּנָה׃	4	= 4 + 0	= 4 + 0
		Meaningful centre: 9	4	= 4 + 0	= 4 + 0
		108=52+4+52 Middle strophe: Strophe 4 vs. 9	56	= 34 + 22	= 53 + 3
		מְרוֹם = 52 Total, v. 2-9			
10	9	כִּי תִהְיֶה אִיבִיָּה יִתְּנָה׃	4	4	4
		כִּי־תִהְיֶה אִיבִיָּה יֹאבְדוּ־	4	4	4
		יִתְפָּרְדּוּ כָּל־פְּעָלֵי אֲוֶן׃	4	4	4
		Total, v. 10	12	= 8 + 4	= 12 + 0
11	10	וְתָרַם כְּרָאִים קָרְנֵי־	3	3	3
		בִּלְתִּי בְּשֶׁמֶן רַעְנָן׃	3	3	3
		Total, v. 11	6	= 3 + 3	= 6 + 0
12	11	וְתַבַּט עֵינֵי בְּשׁוּרֵי־	3	3	3
		בְּקָמִים עָלֵי מְרָעִים תִּשְׁמַעְנָה אֲזִנִּי׃	5	5	5
		Total, v. 12	8	= 8 + 0	= 8 + 0
		Canticle II.1 Strophe 5 Total, v. 10-12	26	= 19 + 7	= 26 + 0
13	12	צָדִיק בְּתָמָר יִפְרָח־	3	3	3
		כְּאֶרֶז בִּלְבָנוֹן יִשְׁגֶּה׃	3	3	3
		Total, v. 13	6	= 3 + 3	= 0 + 6
14	13	שְׁתוּלִים בְּבֵית יִתְּנָה׃	3	3	3
		בְּחִצְרוֹת אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִפְרִיחוּ׃	3	3	3
		Total, v. 14	6	= 3 + 3	= 0 + 6
		Strophe 6 Total, v. 13-14	12	= 6 + 6	= 0 + 12
		Total, v. 11-14	26	= 17 + 9	= 14 + 12
15	14	עוֹד יִנּוּבּוֹן בְּשִׁיבָה־	3	3	3
		דְּשָׁנִים וְרַעְנָנִים יִהְיוּ׃	3	3	3
		Total, v. 15	6	= 3 + 3	= 0 + 6
		Total, v. 12-15	26	= 17 + 9	= 8 + 18
16	15	לְהַגִּיד כִּי־יִשָּׁר יִתְּנָה׃	4	4	4
		צוּרֵי וְלֹא־עוֹלָתָהּ בּוֹ׃	4	4	4
		Total, v. 16	8	= 4 + 4	= 0 + 8
		Strophe 7 Total, v. 15-16	14	= 7 + 7	= 0 + 14
		Canticle II.2 Total, v. 13-16	26	= 13 + 13	= 0 + 26
		Second half: Canto II Total, v. 10-16	52	= 32 + 20	= 26 + 26
		Total, v. 2-16	108	= 66 + 42	= 79 + 29
		With the heading, Total, v. 1-16	112	= 70 + 42	= 83 + 29

Observations

1. In line with the two preceding psalms, this poem is made up of two equal halves, each consisting of **7** verselines with 15 cola and **52** (2 x **26**) words. However, instead of a vacuum between the two halves, Psalm 92 has a little 4-word pivot, **vs. 9**:

וְאַתָּה מְרוֹם לְעֶלְיָם יְהוָה: You, YHWH, are exalted forever!

There cannot be any doubt about this exclamation being the meaningful centre of the psalm. The astoundingly regular numerical structure can be outlined as follows:

vs. 2-7	Canto I	7 verselines	15 cola	52 (2 x 26) words
vs. 9	Centre	1 verseline	1 colon	4 words
vs. 10-16	Canto II	7 verselines	15 cola	52 (2 x 26) words.

Vs. 9 is the arithmetic centre on no less than four levels: strophes, verselines, cola and words. The meaningful centre is additionally highlighted by the middle instance of the **7** occurrences of **יְהוָה**, falling exactly in **vs. 9**. For this focusing instrument, see the General Introduction, "Special devices to highlight the meaningful centre".

By including the heading, and disregarding the evident structure of the psalm proper, Christensen's quest for a meaningful centre wreaks havoc with the apparent, basic structure of the poem. His 'meaningful centre' consists of a combination of the last two words from vs. 8b, and the first two words of vs. 9, with total disregard for syntax, and just because these four words happen to be at the centre of the 112 words of the Masoretic text as it stands. Such a conglomerate of words, which can of course mechanically be expanded until the 'centre' covers all but the entire psalm, cannot possibly qualify as a meaningful centre deliberately contrived by the author. For the basic prerequisites for a *meaningful* centre, see the [General Introduction](#), p. 8, "The meaningful centre of the text".

2. There is no agreement among scholars about the structure of vs. 12. Some (including Van der Lugt) consider it a tricolon, while others regard it as a bicolon, like Fokkelman. He deletes the word **מְרִעִים** 'as superfluous'. I side with him as regards the bicolon, but I would oppose deleting any word, because that would disrupt the perfectly balanced structure of the text on word level.
3. Fokkelman rightly regards **vs. 9** as a separate verseline. Van de Lugt on the other hand, though he recognizes the tiny verse as a relatively independent colon, conjoins it to vs. 10a to form a bicolon verseline. In my opinion, it cannot be accommodated in either of the two sections. Vs. 2-8 and 10-16 are too close-knit for that.

The numerical structure requires an independent, intermediate position for vs. 9. The truth is that it is an unconnected circumstantial clause that can stand by itself. Therefore, we should take its independent, intermediate position seriously into account, particularly in order to guarantee its great power of expression.

4. In terms of verselines - coinciding with the Masoretic verses - the meaningful centre is flanked by two menorahs (Cantos I and II): **15 = 7 + 1 + 7**. The middle verseline of Canto I is constituted by **vs. 5**; that of Canto II by **vs. 13**, each of which may be regarded as a designed meaningful centre. It stands to reason that the number of fullness in this context represents the **7th** day of the week – the psalm is after all a Song for the Sabbath. It also alludes to the **7** days of creation, to which the central verse 5 in Canto I apparently refers: 'your acts' and 'the deeds of your hands'.

Note also the multiples of **7** in the compositional formula of the psalm including the heading: **112** (16 x 7) words in total, with **70** (10 x 7) before and **42** (6 x 7) after atnach, as well as the sevens (in bold face) throughout the text, some of which may of course be coincidence.

5. Both menorahs are made up of **52** (2 x **26**) words. This double divine name number also happens to be the numerical value of what I consider the keyword of the meaningful centre of the poem as a whole: מָרוֹם, 'exalted' (13 + 20 + 6 + 13 = **52**). See the General Introduction, "The numerical value of a keyword in the text".

Here are the frameworks of the two menorahs on either side of the centre:

vs. 2	6 words		vs. 10	12 words
vs. 3	5 words		vs. 11	6 words
vs. 4	7 words		vs. 12	8 words
vs. 5	7 words	14	vs. 13	6 words
vs. 6	7 words		vs. 14	6 words
vs. 7	9 words		vs. 15	6 words
vs. 8	11 words		vs. 16	8 words

12 + 14 = 26

Canto I, the first menorah, is clearly determined by the number **7** in combination with the divine name number **17**: the **7**-word centre is flanked by **14** words, with **7** on either side (vs. 4 and vs. 6), which are enveloped by the **14** words in arms 2 and 5 (vs. 3 and 7), and successively by the **17** words in the outer arms (vs. 2 and 8).

Canto II, the second menorah, is regulated by the divine name number **26**: its 6-word centre is enveloped by **26** words: preceded by **14** in vs. 11-12, and followed by **12** in 14-15; moreover, the **6** central words and the **20** in the two outer arms also amount to **26**. Additionally, in vs. 10-12, **26** words are *addressed to God* (column c), and in 13-16, **26** are *spoken about God* (d).

6. There is little consensus among scholars regarding a sevenfold structure of the poem as a whole. M. Tate, e.g., refers to the 'sabbatic chiastic structure' put forward by R.M. Davidson (SBL meeting, Chicago, IL, Nov. 18, 1988):

A	vs. 1-4	Testimony of praise
B	vs. 5-7	Rejoicing in the work of YHWH
C	vs. 8	The apparent blessing of the wicked will be undone
D	vs. 9	The exaltation of YHWH
C'	vs. 10	The enemies of YHWH will perish
B'	vs. 11-12	Rejoicing in the work of YHWH
A'	vs. 13-16	Testimony regarding the future of the righteous.

However, this 'sabbatic chiastic structure' is rather artificial: it does not really tally with the content; neither does it coincide sufficiently with a justified strophic structure.

Christensen's menorah pattern, 1-4, 5, 6-7, **8-10**, 11-12, 13, 14-16, which is "determined primarily on prosodic grounds", is wide off the mark and, in my view, totally invalid. See my critical remarks in Observation 4 in my Analysis of [Psalm 105](#).

Fokkelman proposed to divide the text into: 2-4, 5-6, 7-8, **9-10**, 11-12, 13-14, and 15-16, but he is not consistent with regard to the unmistakable intermediate position of vs. 9. Though he recognizes it as a separate verseline, he fails to grant it the status of a separate strophe, which it certainly deserves. This critical remark applies to Van der Lugt too, who recognizes vs. 9 only as a 'relatively independent colon'.

A more plausible concentric menorah, which I consider more justified in light of the basic structure of the psalm, can be outlined as follows:

vs. 2-4	<i>How good it is to praise YHWH</i>
vs. 5-6	<i>YHWH causes me to rejoice in his works and thoughts</i>
vs. 7-8	<i>The problem that evildoers flourish will be resolved</i>
vs. 9	The exaltation of YHWH
vs. 10-12	<i>The evildoers will perish, the righteous will prevail</i>
vs. 13-14	<i>YHWH causes the righteous to prosper in his presence</i>
vs. 15-16	<i>How bright is the righteous' future to the Glory of YHWH.</i>

7. Inspired by the conspicuous use of the number **7** here, I scrutinized the text and detected three hidden series of seven – see also Observation 4 in my Analysis of [Psalm 19](#). The three series of seven list YHWH's acts, those of the fools/evildoers and those of the righteous:

YHWH	Fools and evildoers	The righteous
he made me glad (5a)	cannot know (7a)	sprout like a palm (13a)
his works are great (6a)	cannot understand (7b)	grow like a cedar (13b)
his thoughts are deep (6b)	sprout like grass (8a)	planted in the temple (14a)
he is exalted for ever (9)	they flourish (8b)	sprout in the courts (14b)
he exalted my horn (11a)	they are doomed (8c)	bear fruit in old age (15a)
he is upright (16a)	they shall perish (10a-b)	are fresh and green (15b)
he's a righteous rock (16b)*	shall be scattered (10c)	show God is upright (16a)

- * Literally 'my rock, and *in him is no unrighteousness*', which may be interpreted as two distinct characteristics. In that case, YHWH's 8th quality is a *super-additum* focussing especially on his most characteristic quality: his righteousness. If we include YHWH's 'love' and 'faithfulness' (vs. 3), his doings and characteristics altogether amount to **10** – which is the number of the full measure.

For more examples of the hidden presence of the number **7** in series of seven, see my book, *Numerical Secrets of the Bible*, pp. 26-40, especially pp. 31-40, as well as G. Braulik, "Die sieben Säule der Weisheit im Buch Deuteronomium", in *Auf den Spuren der schriftgelehrten Weisen*, FS J. Marböck (BZAW 331), Berlin – New York, Walter de Gruyter, 2003, 13-43.

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